

Improving Home Safety

Many seniors find themselves living alone and wonder what they can do to provide for their safety. Some people have laughed at the TV commercial for a personal response service – “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up”. This is no laughing matter as the statistics show that 1/3 of all elderly over age 65 & living in the community, have experienced a fall. The number goes up to 50% in those over 75. Most falls occur indoors – typically in the bathroom or kitchen. There are many things you can do to decrease your risk for experiencing a fall. These include a thorough medical review, exercise and environmental changes.

You and your physician should review your medical conditions. Some chronic medical problems such as arthritis may limit your mobility and your doctor can recommend treatment to increase your functional abilities. The treatment may consist of medication to decrease symptoms, assistive devices or physical therapy. It is important to have your physician review all of your medications as there are some medications which may cause dizziness. In addition, make sure you have your eyes evaluated regularly and get new eyeglasses when your prescription changes.

Next you will want to increase your body strength and improve your balance. Fall prevention is best obtained by keeping yourself fit through regular exercise. This exercise should address both endurance and strength. You should consult your physician regarding any restrictions before beginning a new exercise program.

The final way you can prevent falls is to reduce home hazards:

- Install railings on **both sides** of stairways
- Install grab bars in the bathroom
- Improve lighting – especially near stairs & halls
- Dispose of unsteady furniture
- Eliminate throw rugs & clutter
- Use non-skid mats in the bathroom
- Avoid slippery surfaces especially in the bathroom and kitchen
- Use non-skid tape on the edge of stairs

An ounce of prevention... will keep you on your feet and injury free. If you would like to discuss this further, you can contact Kathy Laufer or Meghan Kennedy at the Newton Senior Center (617) 796-1660.